DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 987 CS 200 237

AUTHOR	Carlos, Hazel; Murphy, John M.
TITLE	Critical Resources in Afro-American Literature: A Bibliography of Paperbacks for Teachers.
INSTITUTION	Michigan Council of Teachers of English, Ann Arbor.
PUB DATE	Mar 72
NOTE	10p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*African American Studies; *American Literature; Bibliographies; Ethnic Groups; Literary Criticism; Literary History; *Literature; *Negro Literature; Secondary Education; United States History

ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography of relatively inexpensive paperback books has been prepared with the assumption that a list of books about Afro-American literature might be useful to high school and junior high school teachers, especially those who have not had the opportunity to study Afro-American literature in formal courses. The recent publication of great numbers of Afro-American anthologies, casebooks, readers and collections of various kinds, as well as works by individual writers, has meant that the teacher has had an increasingly greater range of choice in finding material that he or she can bring into the classroom. This bibliography, however, has been designed for the teacher's private library and contains many items which would not be appropriate for classroom use. Along with works in literary history and criticism, some titles which provide insight into the more general Afro-American historical and cultural experience have been included. (Author)

ED 068987

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Critical Resources in Afro-American Literature: A Bibliography of Paperbacks for Teachers

Prepared by Hazel Carlos
John M. Murphy

Co-chairmen
Afro-American Literature Committee
Michigan Council of Teachers of English
March, 1972

This bibliography of relatively inexpensive paperback books has been prepared with the assumption that a list of books about Afro-American literature might be useful to high school and junior high school teachers, especially those who have not had the opportunity to study Afro-American literature in formal courses. The great explosion in recent years of anthologies, casebooks, readers and collections of various kinds, as well as works by individual writers in Afro-American literature, has meant that the teacher has had an increasingly greater range of choice in finding material that he or she can bring into the classroom. This bibliography, however, has been designed for the teacher's private library and contains books which, most often, would not be appropriate for classroom use. Along with works in literary history and criticism, some titles which provide insight into the more general Afro-American historical and cultural experience have been included.

Response to or inquiries concerning this bibliography can be sent to the Department of English, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001.

Abcarian, Richard, ed. Richard Wright's Native Son: A Critical Handbook Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1970. $2.95.

A useful tool for the student of Wright, this book has nearly 60 pages of contemporary reviews on Native Son, several outstanding critical articles on the novel published in the last thirty years, an excellent chronology on Wright and a comprehensive bibliography. A few articles on "issues" suggested by Native Son (e.g., Cleaver's "Notes on a Native Son") seem gratuitous.

Abramson, Doris E. Negro Playwrights in the American Theatre, 1925-1959 New York: Columbia University Press, 1969. $2.95

Essentially a survey rather than a critical synthesis, this book is useful as a reference work, including as it does an introduction which covers the period prior to 1925, and providing historical and biographical background summaries, and some commentary on plays by Garland Anderson, James Baldwin, William Branch, William Wells Brown, Theodore Brown, Alice Childress, Joseph S. Cotter, Ossie Davis, Rudolph Fisher, Lorraine Hansberry, Adam Hill, Langston Hughes, Hall Johnson, LeRoi Jones, Loften Mitchell, Louis Peterson, Wallace Thurman, Douglas Turner Ward, Theodore Ward, Frank Wilson, and Richard Wright.

Bigsby, C. W. E., ed. The Black American Writer: Fiction. Baltimore: The Penguin Books, Inc., 1971. $1.95
The Black American Writer: Poetry and Drama Baltimore: The Penguin Books, Inc., 1971. $1.95

These two volumes contain some very fine essays on the black American writer. Among the best are Richard Gilman's controversial review of Soul on Ice, Mike Thellwell on Baldwin's Another Country, Hoyt Fuller on the "new" black writers, Don Jaffee on Gwendolyn Brooks and Louis Phillips' "LeRoi Jones and Contemporary Black Drama."

Bone, Robert A. The Negro Novel in America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958, 1965. $1.95
Richard Wright. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1970. $.95

Published in 1958 (with material added on James Baldwin in 1965), Bone's book has been criticized by many black writers and critics because of its patronizing tone (Bone's manner of "rating" black novelists smacks of condescension) and shifting categories of judgment. However, there is some very solid criticism in the book and much useful literary history. The pamphlet on Wright is concerned mainly with Native Son, Black Boy and The Outsider. Much more comprehensive treatment of Wright's achievement as a novelist can be found in Edward Margolies' The Art of Richard Wright (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), Dan McCall's The Example of Richard Wright (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969) and Russell C. Brignano's Richard Wright: An Introduction to the Man and His Works (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), none of which is available in paperback.

Bontemps, Arna & Jack Conroy _Anyplace But Here_. New York: Hill and Wang, 1945, 1966. $1.95

This book should be useful to any student of Afro-American literature because it is a social history of the great migrations of black people from rural areas to cities. The authors focus on individuals who were important in the black community and in the cultural history of America. These include a wide variety of types, among them a few important writers.

Brawley, Benjamin _The Negro Genius_. New York: Apollo Editions, 1937, n.d. $2.45

Like several early black critics, Brawley was forced to devote much of his career to simply proving the existence of black art. Thus, _The Negro Genius_, originally published in 1937, is a valuable catalogue and survey of black writing, music, theatre, painting and sculpture from the early 1700's to the late 1930's. Although Brawley begins with some rather curious assumptions about the limits of the "Negro temper," his judgments are generally perceptive and informative.

Brown, Sterling _Negro Poetry and Drama_ and _The Negro in American Fiction_. New York: Atheneum, 1937, 1969. $3.45

Published in 1937, these studies have been sources for students ever since that time (including Robert Bone who provides a modern Preface) and are still astonishing in their perception, clarity and breadth. One problem, however, is that the volumes are not indexed.

Butcher, Margaret Just _The Negro in American Culture_. New York: New American Library, 1956. 95¢

Based on materials left by Alain Locke, this book surveys the black presence in American culture in a very readable and informative fashion. However, the sections on jazz and blues are very poor (Locke never really felt or understood jazz). The sections on folklore, folk poetry, folk music and modern literature are much better.

Charters, Samuel _The Poetry of the Blues_. New York: Avon Books, 1963, 1970. $1.25

Though not exclusively concerned with blues as a literary form, Charters points out some of its formal elements, including use of imagery, diction, metaphor, stanzaic patterns, etc. Other paperback books on blues and Afro-American music also provide some insight into the connection between Afro-American music and literature: Paul Oliver's _The Meaning of the Blues_ (New York: Collier Books, 1960) $1.25, contains 350 blues and blues fragments, most of them pre-World War II, and a socio-historic analysis of their motivation. Charles Keil's _Urban Blues_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) $2.45, brings the methods of Aristotle, sociology, Kenneth Burke, symbolic logic, transactional psychology, etc., to a remarkable analysis of modern blues. LeRoi Jones' (Amiri Baraka) _Blues People_ (New York: Apollo Editions, 1963) $1.95, has the virtue of illustrating historically a central truth of American culture: every time black music is sucked-up, "whitened," cheapened and exhausted in the gut of mainstream culture, black musicians have created new forms to express their identity.

Clarke, John H., ed. William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968. $1.95

The essays in Ten Black Writers range in quality from excellent (Bennett, Harding, Thelwell) to very poor (Killens, Kaiser), but read together they make up an interesting (and somewhat overwhelming) critical and historical refutation of the Pulitzer-Prize-winning best seller.

Cook, Mercer & Stephen E. Henderson The Militant Black Writer. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969. $1.95

This book is made up of two lectures given at the University of Wisconsin in 1968. Professor Cook's "African Voices of Protest" briefly traces the Black Nationalist impulse in African literature prior to World War II, surveys post-World War II fiction and poetry and concludes with a discussion of negritude. Professor Henderson's "Survival Motion" is much less systematically developed and is concerned with the political, cultural and literary sources of the black consciousness of the present. Henderson's lecture includes a very comprehensive and interesting speculation on the meaning of "Soul."

Cruse, Harold The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual. New York: Apollo Editions, 1967. $3.50

In his scathing criticism of the Old Left, advocates of Black Capitalism, and other groups who have attempted to lead the black community into various panaceas, Cruse constantly points to the absence of a clearly defined cultural base as the chief limitation among Negro leaders in this century. The book is helpful in explaining the political implications in much recent black writing, and has some commentary on the writings of Claude McKay, Richard Wright, Lorraine Hansberry and LeRoi Jones.

Eckman, Fern Marja The Furious Passage of James Baldwin. New York: Popular Library, 1966. 75¢

This popularized biography by a journalist and close friend of the subject provides much personal background for each of Baldwin's major works, though it does not pretend to treat them with substantive literary analysis.

Ellison, Ralph Shadow and Act. New York: New American Library, 1966. 95¢

Often cited in the work of other critics, Ellison's essays in Shadow and Act include studies in American literature, statements on the function of the artist, book reviews, interviews, and early journalistic pieces. "Twentieth Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity," "The World and the Jug," "Hidden Name and Complex Fate" and "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke" all deal with Ellison's concept of the novelist as artist rather than propagandist.

Epps, Archie, ed. The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard. New York: Apollo Editions, 1968. $1.95

Most of this volume by the Dean of Harvard College is made up of a long essay which analyzes Malcolm's speeches and writings from an eclectic perspective, including traditional literary criticism (though one wonders about the strained parallels Epps makes between Malcolm and certain characters in Shakespeare). The volume also contains three speeches Malcolm made at Harvard.

Ferguson, Blanche E. Countee Cullen and the Negro Renaissance. New York: Apollo Editions, 1966. $1.95

Essentially a biography rather than a critical study, this book is too simplistic and sentimental to be of much use in studying Cullen's poetry or the Renaissance.

Gayle, Addison, Jr., ed. Black Expression. New York: Weybright and Talley, Inc., 1969. $4.95

ed. The Black Aesthetic. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1971. $2.50

Black Expression contains essays by black writers of various periods on black writing, including material on folk expression, poetry, fiction, drama and criticism. Most of the essays have been anthologized elsewhere, but it is convenient to have them all in one place. Black Aesthetic is a collection of 31 essays (all but three written since 1968) on many aspects of black art (most of the contributors attempt to make some kind of distinction between the black aesthetic and the white aesthetic), including essays on theory, music, poetry, fiction and drama.

Gibson, Donald B., ed. Five Black Writers. New York: New York University Press, 1970. $3.50

Five Black Writers is made up of reprinted journal articles, including six on Richard Wright, four each on Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, three each on Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), and six under the heading of "The Writer and Social Responsibility." It includes a fairly substantial critical bibliography, and is thus a valuable reader's companion and introduction to the criticism of black literature.

Gross, Seymour L. & John E. Hardy, eds. Images of the Negro in American Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. $2.95

A collection of essays by black and white writers on black writers and white writers who have written about blacks. The first six essays constitute a kind of historical survey; the last nine are on individual writers. Overall quality is very good. There is also a very useful bibliography which follows the organization of the book.

Hemenway, Robert, ed. The Black Novelist. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1970. $2.95

The essays in this book are divided into two parts. The first group treats novelists from Griggs to Baldwin; the second group is by novelists themselves on other writers, the problems facing the black writer and the responsibility of the black novelist.

Hill, Herbert, ed. Anger, and Beyond. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. $1.45

Another collection of essays by black and white writers which is much more miscellaneous in nature than most of the collections described in this bibliography. There are good pieces by Horace Cayton, M. Carl Holman, LeRoi Jones and Albert Murray. The book also has much informal literary history.

Isaacs, Harold R. The New World of Negro Americans. New York: Viking Press, 1963. $1.95

Published in 1963, this is a book about attitudes held by black people concerning the impact of Africa on world affairs, the search for identity, the question of integration vs. separatism, etc. For the teacher

the most interesting parts of the book contain conversations with and references to the works of famous black writers like Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Lorraine Hansberry, W.E.B. DuBois and others on the issue of how much black people in America are really Africans.

Jahn, Janheinz — Mantu: An Outline of the New African Culture. New York: Grove Press, 1961. $2.45
Neo-African Literature: A History of Black Writing. New York: Grove Press, 1969. $1.95

Translated from the German by Marjorie Greene, Mantu surveys African and neo-African literature and art from the standpoint of the relationship between "native" African forms and attitudes and the modern search for identity. The famous chapter, "Blues: Conflict in Cultures" is especially useful to the American reader. Neo-African Literature is a compendious history of what Jahn calls Afro-Arab literature (an overlap of Islamic and African cultures) and neo-African literature (an overlap of African and Western cultures). This includes written and oral literature from Africa, South America, the Caribbean and North America. Part III ("The American Scene") which is a little more than one hundred pages in length is most useful to the American reader.

Kelly, Ernece B., ed. — Searching for America. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1972. $1.75

Prepared by the CCCC/NCTE Review Committee, for the NCTE Task Force on Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English, this book contains twelve evaluations of frequently used college level anthologies of American literature (eight of which are general collections) and four background essays which treat Afro-American literature, Asian-American literature, Chicanos and American literature, and American Indian literature. Read collectively, the evaluations do prove a statement the editor makes in her Introduction: "American literature anthologies today give students only a skewed and deceptive portrait of American life and letters." However, throughout the book there are passages like this: "Like the uncovered top of a cesspool, like the burst main of a sewer, the putrid stench of white racism saturates the air, pollutes the water, and corrodes the very soil of American life. Among the major tributaries, disseminating this contamination throughout the body-politic is none other than the mainstream of American literature. Worse than this, it is the sulphuric well-spring from which much of the poison originates." Such self-indulgent hyperbole weakens an otherwise valuable and necessary book. Among the background essays, "Chicanos and American Literature" by Philip D. Ortego and Jose A. Carrasco is especially recommended.

Kent, George E. — Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture. Chicago: Third World Press, 1971. $2.50

Though we have been unable to get a copy of this book, we assume it contains many of the critical articles Dr. Kent has published in magazines like CLA Journal and Black World, including his brilliant studies of James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks and Claude McKay. These essays represent a very high order of scholarship and criticism.

Littlejohn, David — Black on White: A Critical Survey of Writing by American Negroes. New York: Viking Press, 1966. $1.45

Littlejohn, a scholar who has written extensively on the 18th century, creates the impression that he is looking down from Mt. Olympus as he surveys the efforts of black American writers. Very little of what he

reads pleases him and he often dismisses a half dozen writers from any given period in three sentences. This would not be so exasperating if one did not sense that Littlejohn is not very familiar with the large body of critical commentary on Afro-American literature he might have investigated.

Major, Clarence — Dictionary of Afro-American Slang. New York: International Publishers, 1970. $1.95

The Dictionary is a very useful book for any teacher or student of Afro-American literature; however, Major does not acknowledge his (or other lexicographers') debt to Mezzrow's Really the Blues.

Margolies, Edward — Native Sons: A Critical Study of Twentieth-Century Negro American Authors. New York: Lippincott, 1968. $1.95

This book contains a hurried survey of black writing from 1900 to 1940 and individual chapters on William Attaway, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Chester Himes, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, William Demby and LeRoi Jones. Margolies' judgments seem parallel to those of Bone (there is a very heavy emphasis on fiction) in many instances, but much of this work is sensitive and fair.

Mays, Benjamin E. — The Negro's God As Reflected in His Literature. New York: Atheneum, 1938. $2.75

Published in 1938 by a Professor of Religion at Howard University, this book was the first attempt to probe the huge body of folk and cultivated literature produced by Negroes until that time to discover its image of God. As Vincent Harding points out in the Preface, the attempt was not altogether successful. Mays used two categories: "mass" and "classical" (under "mass" we find J. W. Johnson's God's Trombones and the sermons of Alexander Crummell, hardly what one would think of as folk creations). However, one of May's conclusions (that the stereotyped idea of black religion as an opiate, as an "otherworldly" phenomenon, cannot stand up to careful scrutiny) is well-documented and is a singular contribution to our understanding of the black experience.

Miller, Ruth, ed. — Backgrounds to Blackamerican Literature. Scranton, Pa.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1971. $3.95

The editor has divided this collection into two parts: "Historical Backgrounds" and "Literary Backgrounds." The first section has essays on slavery, blacks in the colonial period, slave insurrections, Reconstruction, lynching, the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers, etc. The second part has essays on a variety of literary topics, including black drama, the Negro Renaissance, the dilemmas of the black writer and articles on individual writers. Appended to the book is a "Chronology of Blackamerican History and Literature," which has some curious omissions (Delany and McKay, for example, are completely excluded in spite of their historical importance in Afro-American literature).

Mitchell, Loften — Black Drama. New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1967. $2.45

A breezy, often witty, and very readable historical survey of black drama from colonial times to the present with greatest emphasis on the 20th century. Mitchell's highly anecdotal style is especially suited for the Harlem Renaissance period.

Murray, Albert — The Omni-Americans. New York: Avon Books, 1970. $1.50

In this group of essays, Murray deals with "the folklore of white supremacy and the fakelore of black pathology." The book ranges over many subjects; but for the reader interested in literature, there is treatment of James Baldwin, Warren Miller, Claude Brown, Gordon Parks and William Styron. Like Ellison, Murray does not accept the notion that being black must involve a life of endless agony and despair. He is optimistic (perhaps too optimistic) about the possibility of genuine cultural pluralism in America.

Reilly, John M., ed. — Twentieth Century Interpretations of INVISIBLE MAN. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970. $1.45

This collection has ten critical articles on Invisible Man (at least three have not been anthologized elsewhere) and five more essays on Ellison's achievement (or lack of it) as a writer. There is a chronology of important dates in Ellison's life and career and a very selective bibliography on references to Invisible Man not included in the collection.

Robinson, Armstead L., Craig C. Foster & Donald H. Ogilvie, eds. Black Studies in the University. New York: Bantam Books, 1969. 95¢

Any teacher of Afro-American literature would benefit from reading this book because it serves as excellent background to all of the current issues in Black Studies. A record of the significant speeches, statements and reactions of the Yale Conference on Afro-American Studies in 1968, nearly every imaginable point of view is represented from mild liberal to extreme Black Nationalist.

Trimmer, Joseph F., ed. — A Casebook on Ralph Ellison's INVISIBLE MAN. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972. $2.95

Black American Literature: Notes on the Problem of Definition. Muncie, Ind.: Ball State University, 1971. n.p. indicated

More ambitious in scope than the Reilly collection, this casebook on the Invisible Man has five essays on the racial heritage (Washington, DuBois, Locke, Garvey and Wright) from which Ellison drew themes for his novel, four essays on the artistic heritage (Emerson, Eliot, Brown and Howe), Ellison's famous rejoinder to Howe, eight critical articles on Invisible Man, Ellison's address at the National Book Award in 1953, and a comprehensive bibliography on the novel. Trimmer's twenty-five page monograph on Black American literature is very intelligent and balanced. The question which Trimmer asks, "Is there a difference between art that explores the Black experience because it is a way to discover the human experience, and art that makes the Black Experience its absolute theme?" can never, as Trimmer admits, be really answered. Copies of the monograph can be secured (presumably without charge) by writing to Mrs. Gertrude Kene, Director of University Publications, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana 47306.

Turner, Darwin T. Afro-American Writers. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970. $1.95

For the teacher or student of Afro-American literature, this may be the most useful book published in recent years. It is a comprehensive unannotated bibliography with sections on aids to research (including bibliographies and periodicals), background works (including autobiographies, slave narratives, historical studies, etc.) individual writers (this is the greater part of the book), literary history and criticism (by genre) and selected criticism of Africans and Afro-Americans as characters.

Turner, Darwin T. & Barbara Dodds Stanford Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Literature by Afro-Americans. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1972. $1.50

Dr. Turner's essay, "Teaching Literature by Afro-Americans" should be required reading for any teacher who uses Afro-American writers. Perhaps the most impressive thing about it is that it requires the teacher to examine his own assumptions about the black experience, the functions of literature and the role of taste in selecting materials for classroom use. And Dr. Turner is able to induce this self-examination without a hint of condescension. There is also much practical advice, including ways of using Afro-American literature in integrated classes, lists of works by individual writers, anthologies and professional aids (Dr. Turner also provides a brief history of Afro-American literature with emphasis on "usable" writers) and ammunition for justifying the separate course in Afro-American literature should administrators, parents, students or school boards deny its legitimacy. Mrs. Stanford's contribution on "practice" in the teaching of Afro-American literature includes four highly-detailed, thematically-developed units for junior high school students and an essay on methods of introducing senior high school students to literary analysis (Mrs. Stanford illustrates teaching the elements of the novel with an examination of Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones). While she was teaching at Vashon High School in St. Louis, Mrs. Stanford published an earlier work, Negro Literature for High School Students (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 19[illegible]), $2.00, which is still useful in introducing teachers to what is availa[illegible] in Afro-American literature for junior high and senior high school classes. Along with Searching for America (see entry for Ernece B. Kelly), these books can be ordered from the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Williams, John A. Most Native of Sons: A Biography of Richard Wright. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1970. $1.45

A simply-written and sympathetic biography, Most Native of Sons does not provide much illumination into Wright's major works, but instead focuses on Wright's personal struggles with racism in America, the debilitating effects of fame abroad and the ironies of Wright's role as a "spokesman for his race." A much fuller and more useful biography is Constance Webb's Richard Wright: A Biography (New York: Putnam, 1968) which is not available in paperback.

Williams, John A. & Charles F. Harris, eds. Amistad I: Writings on Black History and Culture. New York: Vintage, 1970. $1.95

Amistad 2. New York: Vintage, 1971. $1.95

These book-length journals contain much excellent criticism on Afro-American literature. The first volume has a provocative essay by Addison Gayle, Jr. on the insidious influence of the Nashville Fugitives on American criticism, an interesting interview with Chester Himes, a fine essay on Baldwin by Calvin Hernton and Hughes' famous "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." The second volume contains essays by Mel Watkins on the lyrics of James Brown, Paula Giddings on the poetry of Don Lee and Wright's prophetic essay of 1937, "Blueprint for Negro Writing."